

House Republican Press Release

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Representative Frey Introduces Legislation To Protect Good Samaritans



HARTFORD—State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, has introduced legislation to protect public safety workers who are injured or killed while serving as Good Samaritans during off-duty emergency situations. Senate Bill 591 would extend workers' compensation coverage to any police officer, firefighter or emergency medical services personnel employed by the state or one

of its political subdivisions for any injury or fatality that occurs while such employee is responding to any off-duty emergency.

On Tuesday, March 14, Rep. Frey testified before the Labor and Public Employees Committee in favor of the bill.

“On a daily basis, our police, paramedics and firefighters risk their own safety, while both on and off duty, for the benefit of strangers,” said Rep. Frey. “This legislation would protect them for offering their services as good Samaritans.”

Rep. Frey added that the issue of workers compensation benefits for Good Samaritans was brought to his attention by Jim Belote, a member and former chief of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department. The legislation is also supported by Louis Yarrish, Chief of the Ridgefield Fire Department (who will be retiring shortly).

During his testimony, Rep. Frey also asked committee members to consider amending SB 591 to provide coverage to off duty police officers, firefighters, EMT's and other emergency services personnel – regardless of whether they are employed by the state or a municipality.

“These professionals often stop at the scene of an accident or other incident where their training can be of assistance because it is their instinct to do so,” said Rep. Frey. “They should have equal protection in the event of an accident resulting in an injury.”

During his testimony, Rep. Frey detailed a tragic example of a Good Samaritan who was not protected by workers' compensation benefits that occurred in Florida in June 2002. Off duty firefighter Shane Kelly, 26, came upon a serious accident on the Florida Turnpike. Knowing that his skills and training as a firefighter could be helpful, Kelly immediately stopped to offer assistance. Unfortunately, a tractor trailer crashed into

Kelly and six other people assisting at the scene of the accident, killing him and another Good Samaritan, an Orlando doctor. The Florida State Legislature passed legislation into law later that year broadening the scope in which firefighters and public safety officers are considered to be acting within the course and scope of employment.

“In Connecticut, we should not wait for a tragedy to take place before we enact similar legislation,” said Rep. Frey.